Steven Brown

Cruciabundus

For Organ

Program Notes

"Cruciabundus" is Latin for "agonizing", "tormenting", "torturing", or "painful". The following score can be interpreted as depicting a slow, painful death and the accompanying descent into madness, starting out as merely unsettling and slowly becoming more erratic and agonizing as it progresses, until it finally reaches an excruciating apex and then abruptly goes silent.

There are 5 recurring melodic ideas in this score, three of which are very briefly foreshadowed in the introduction (mm. 1-6). The first is the melody that appears in mm. 7-21, which is introduced and then developed in two different keys. The second is the theme which is introduced in mm. 1-2 and is later developed in mm. 31-54. Both of these themes are primarily expressed in a diatonic context. The third and fourth themes, which are introduced in mm. 3-4 and mm. 5-6, respectively, are initially heard as short diatonic motives, but later become much longer and non-diatonic melodies in mm. 63-94; from m. 55 on, there is no longer any unifying key signature (although E natural arguably remains the tonal center until at least m. 95). The final theme, appearing in mm. 95-143, is an excerpt from the well-known medieval chant known as the *Dies Irae*, which has culturally come to symbolize death; in this context it is transposed to Phrygian mode and non-diatonically harmonized with minor and diminished chords to create an unsettling effect. During the last few phrases of the chant excerpt, the other themes re-appear in the upper part, this time highly distorted and played much more quickly. At m. 144, tonality is suspended completely, and the remainder of the piece uses a combination of secundal harmony and a twelve-tone row in a chaotic rush to the final, piercing tone cluster.

Performance Notes

In order for this piece to sound correctly, the stops used for the pedals should be twice the size of those used for the manuals. Using stops of the same size may cause the pedal part to occasionally rise above the left-hand part in the manuals, resulting in the wrong note being in the bass part and disrupting the harmonic structure. For the best effect, I recommend pausing for at least 5 seconds after the first fermata, and holding still for at least 10-15 seconds during the fermata in the last measure. These uncomfortable silences will add to the intensity of the piece, especially at the end. The metronome marks do not need to be followed exactly; they are primarily guides to approximately how much the tempo should change in between sections. The performer should also be familiar with the alto clef, as this clef is used in mm. 95-148 in order to avoid using too many ledger lines.

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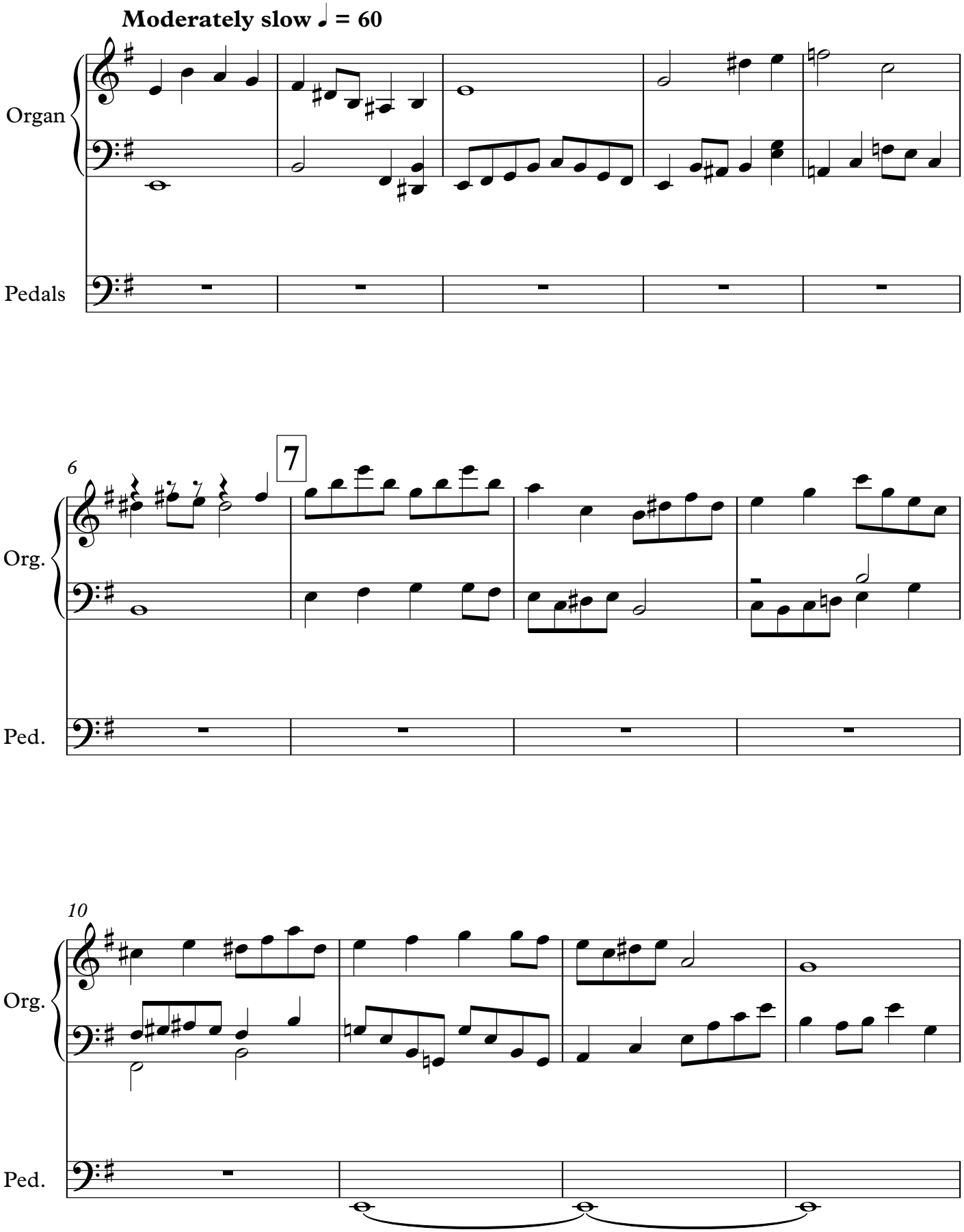
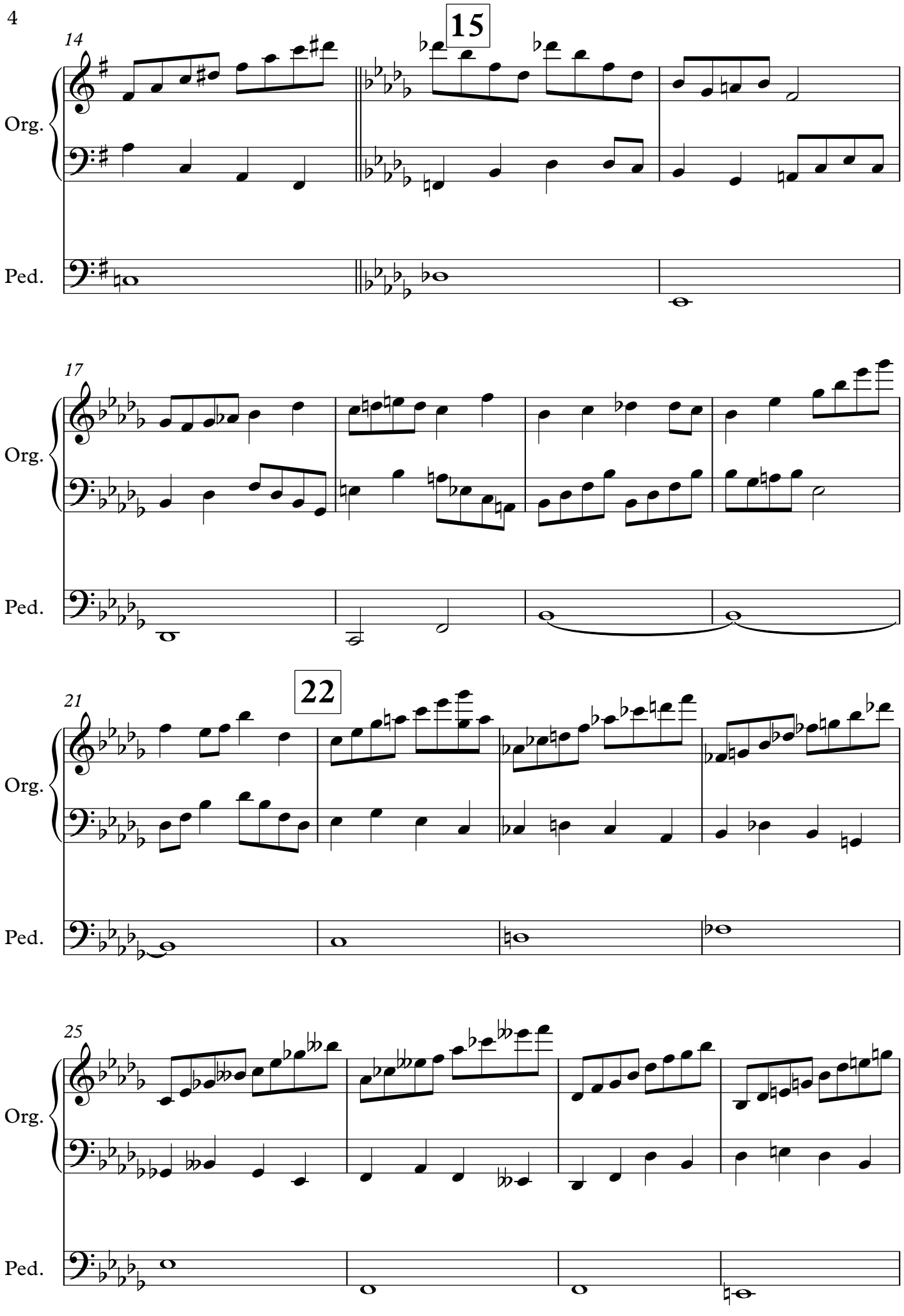
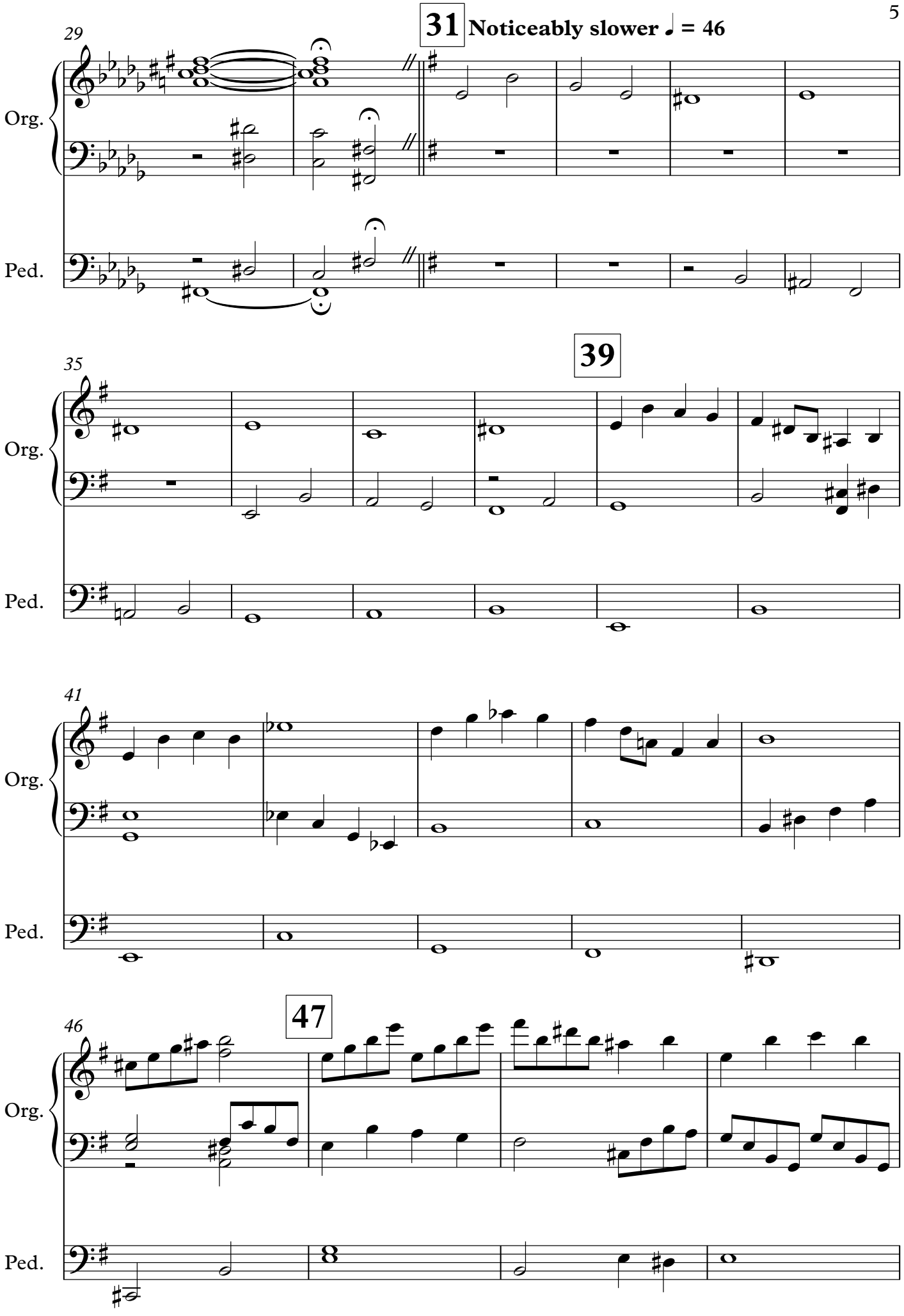
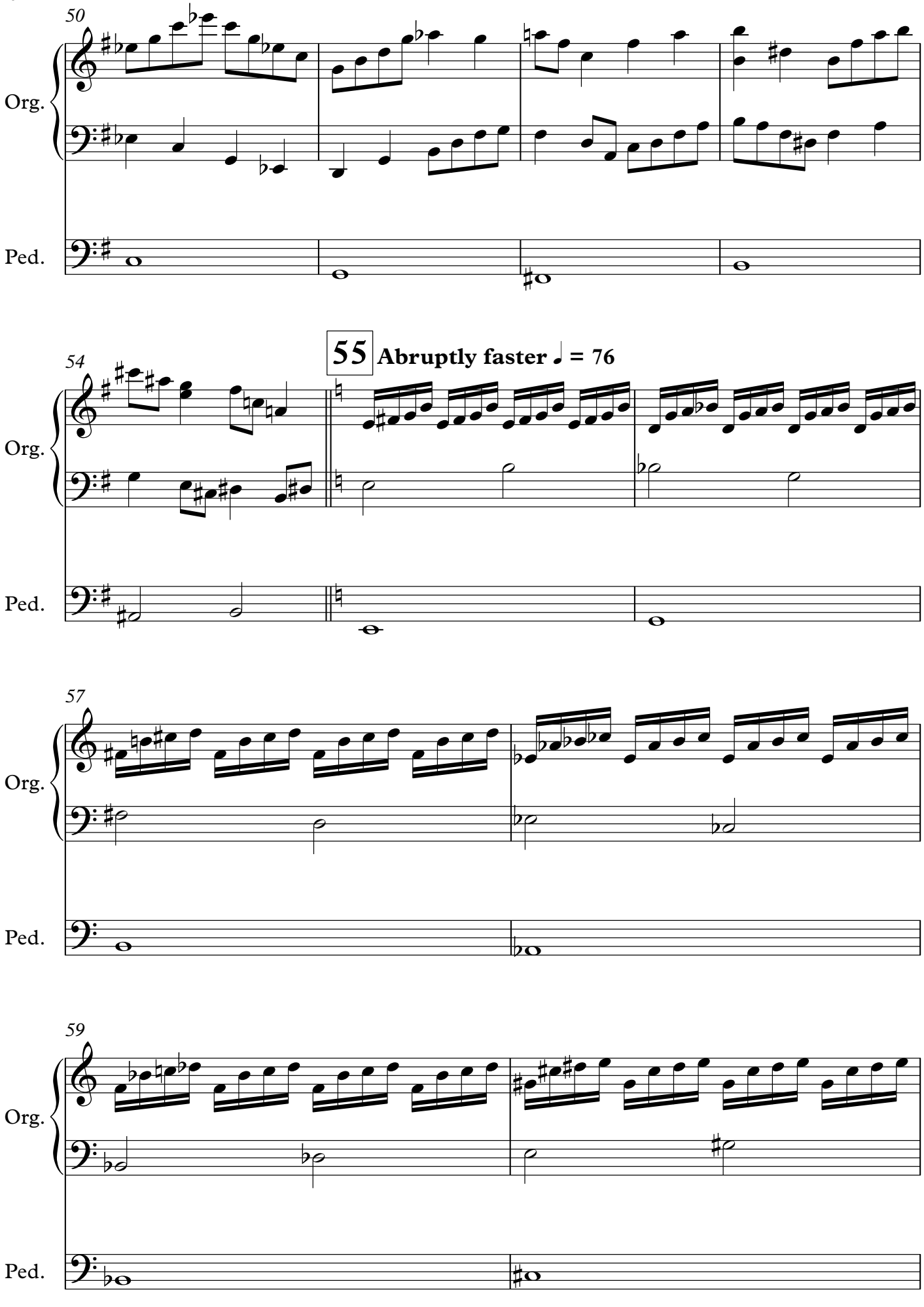
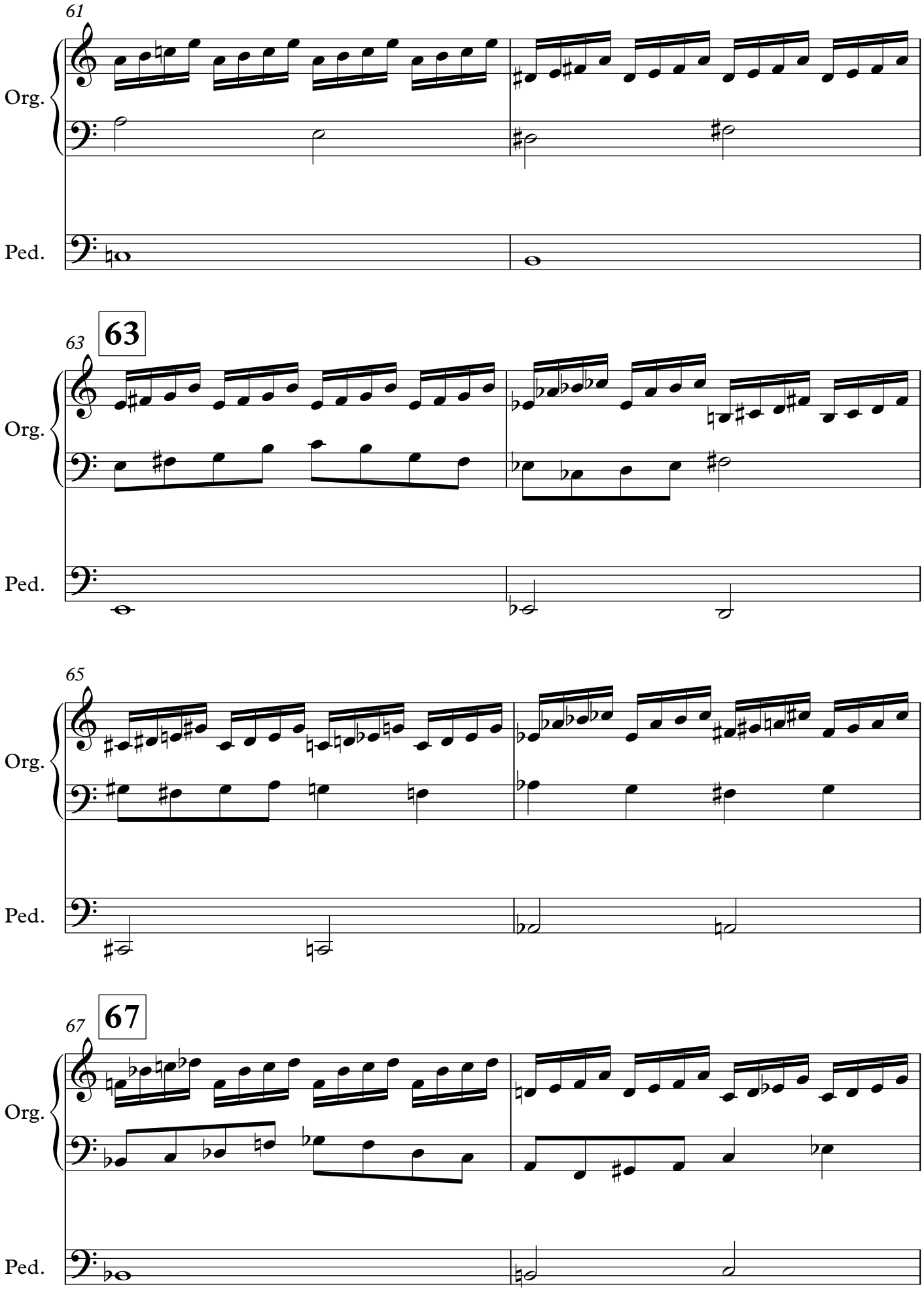
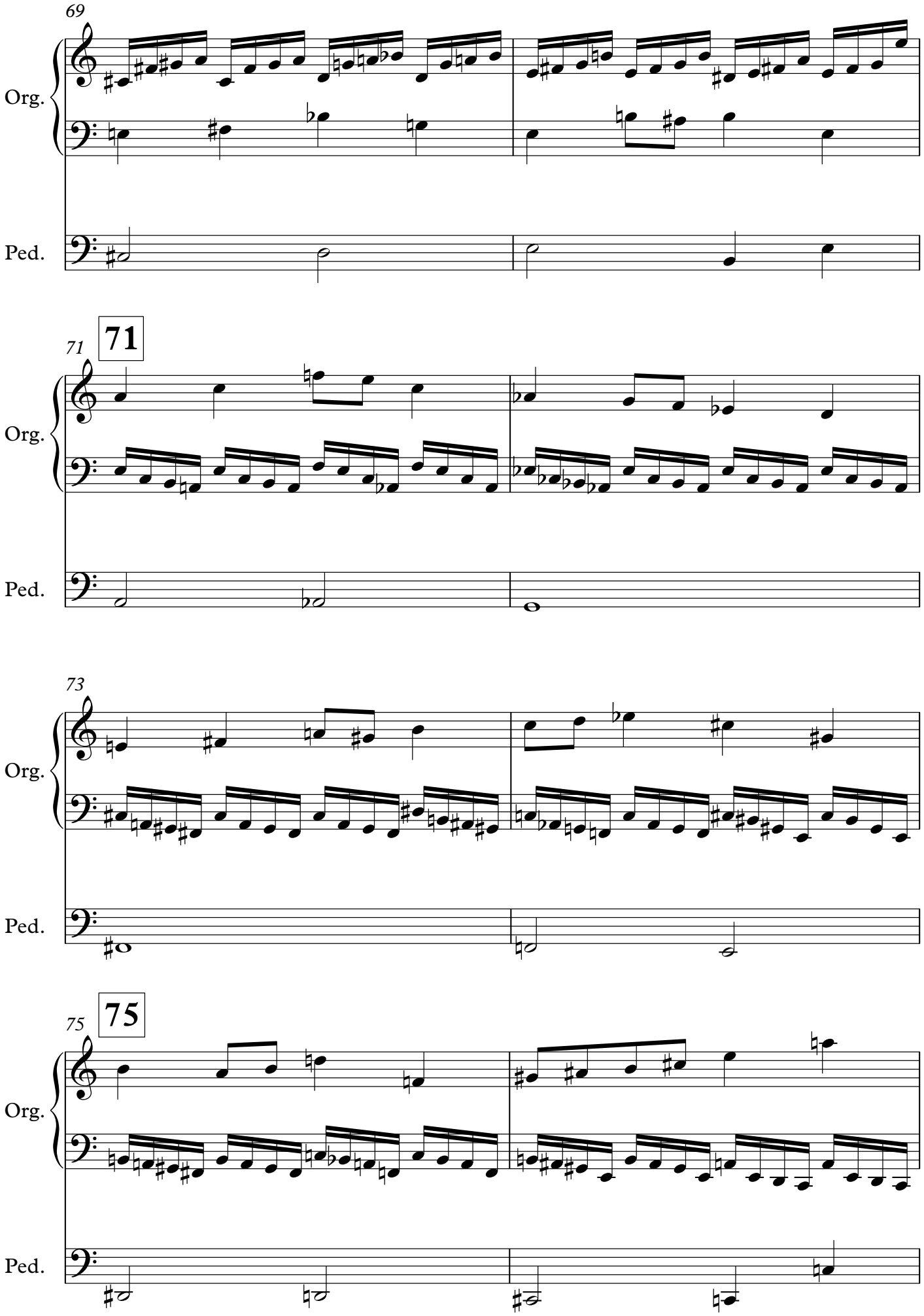


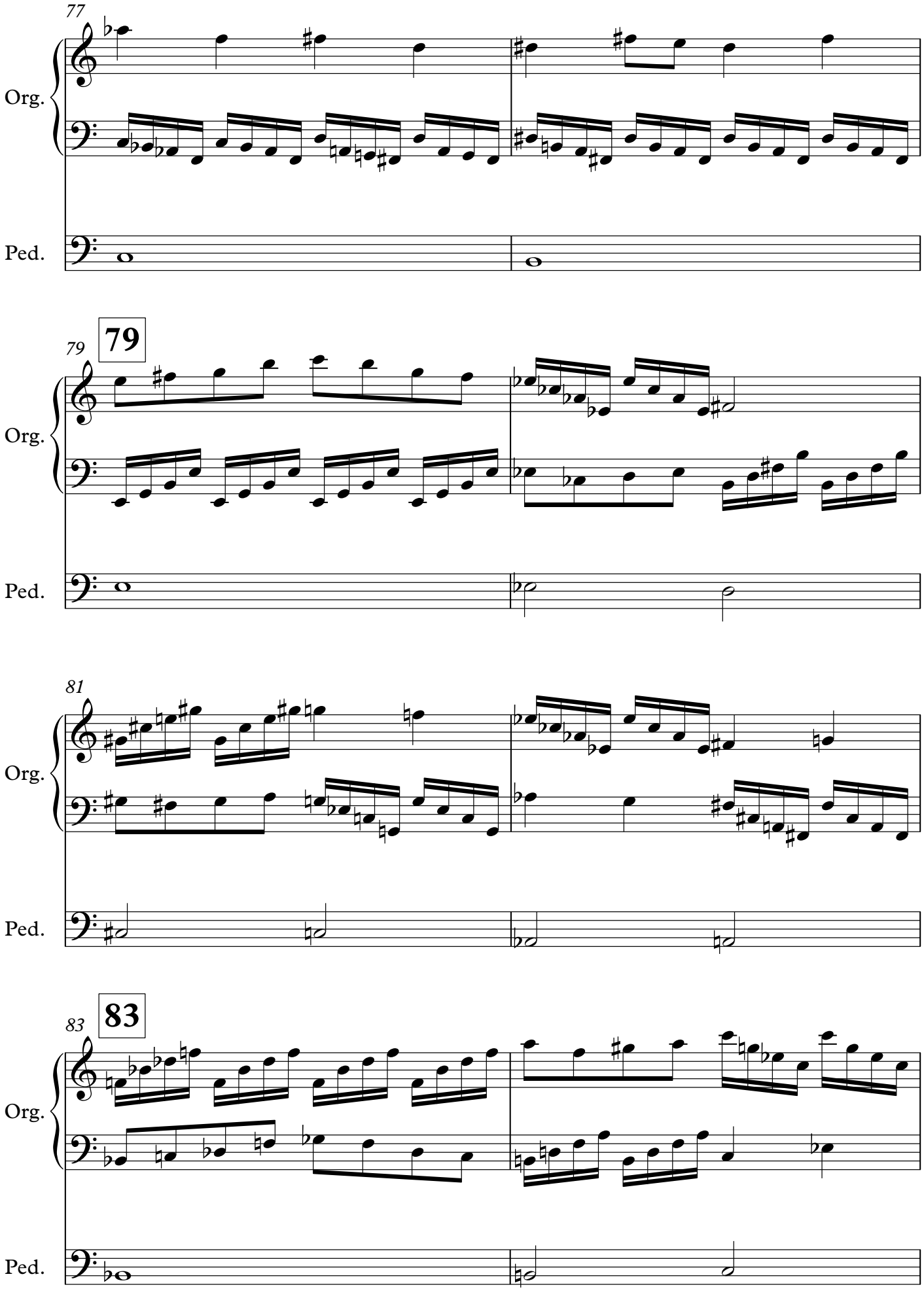

14
15
Org.
Ped.
17
Org.
Ped.
21
22
Org.
Ped.
25
Org.
Ped.

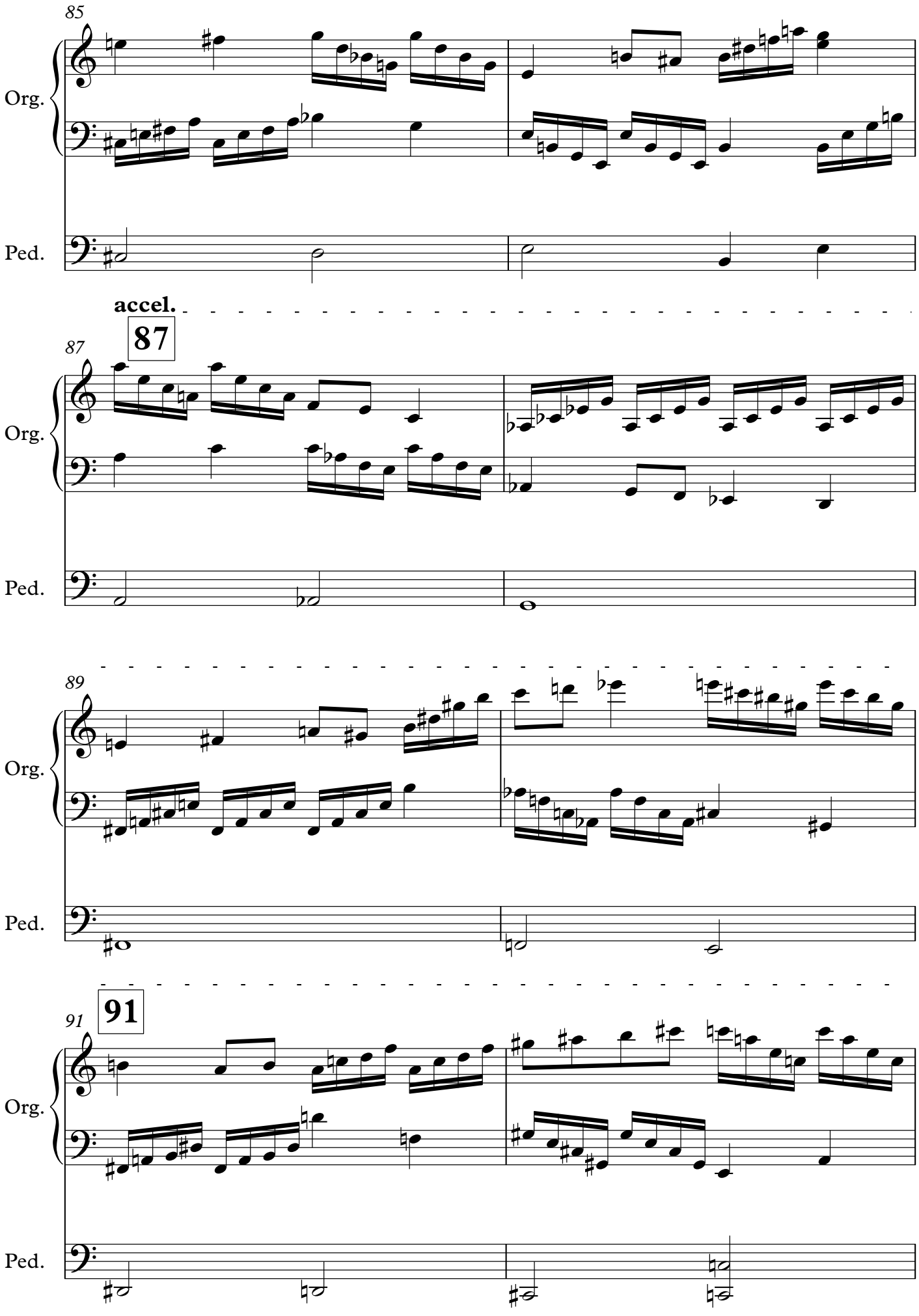

29
31
Noticeably slower ♩ = 46
Org.
Ped.
35
39
Org.
Ped.
41
Org.
Ped.
46
47
Org.
Ped.

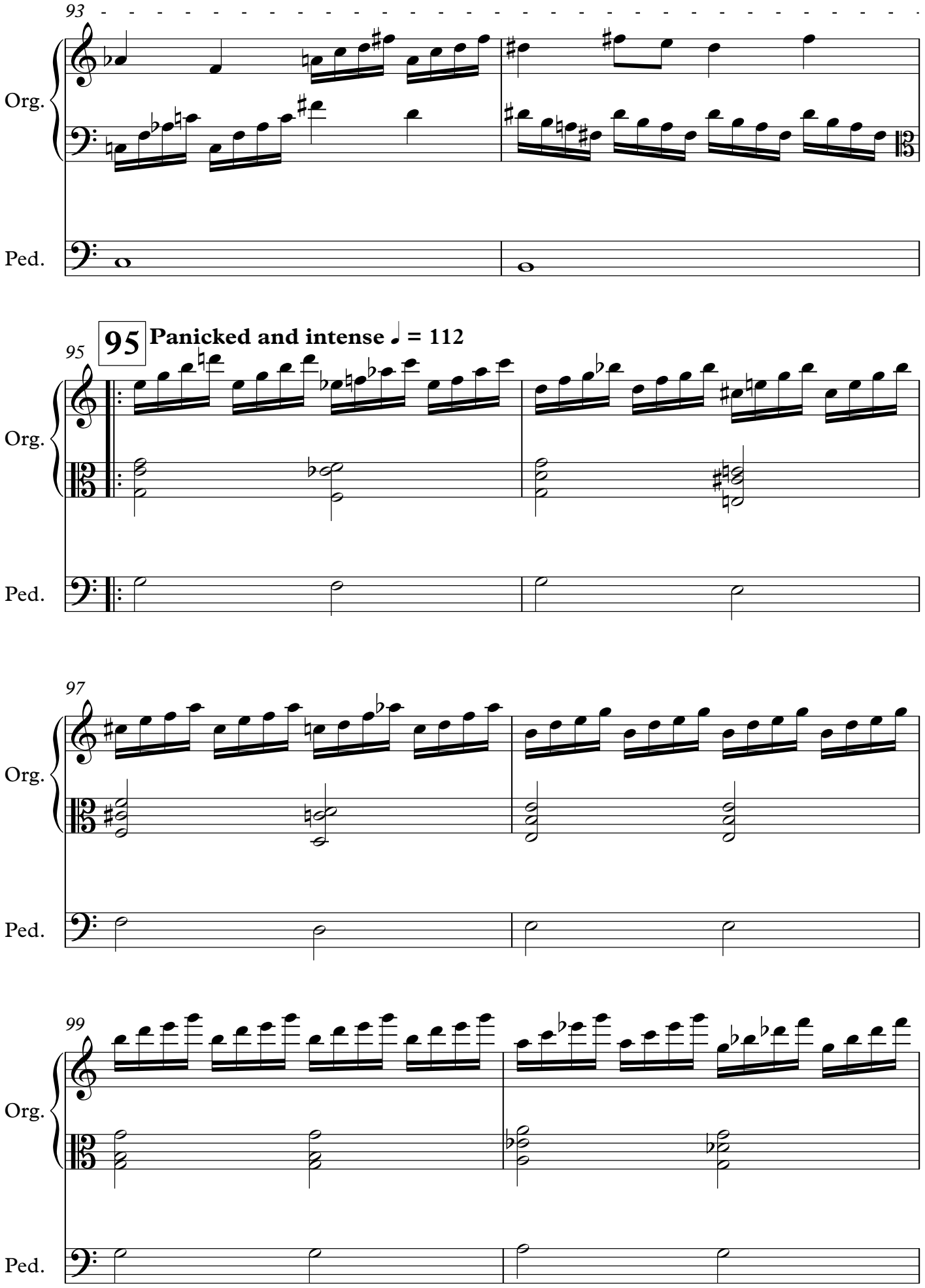

50
Org.
Ped.
54
55
Abruptly faster ♩ = 76
Org.
Ped.
57
Org.
Ped.
59
Org.
Ped.

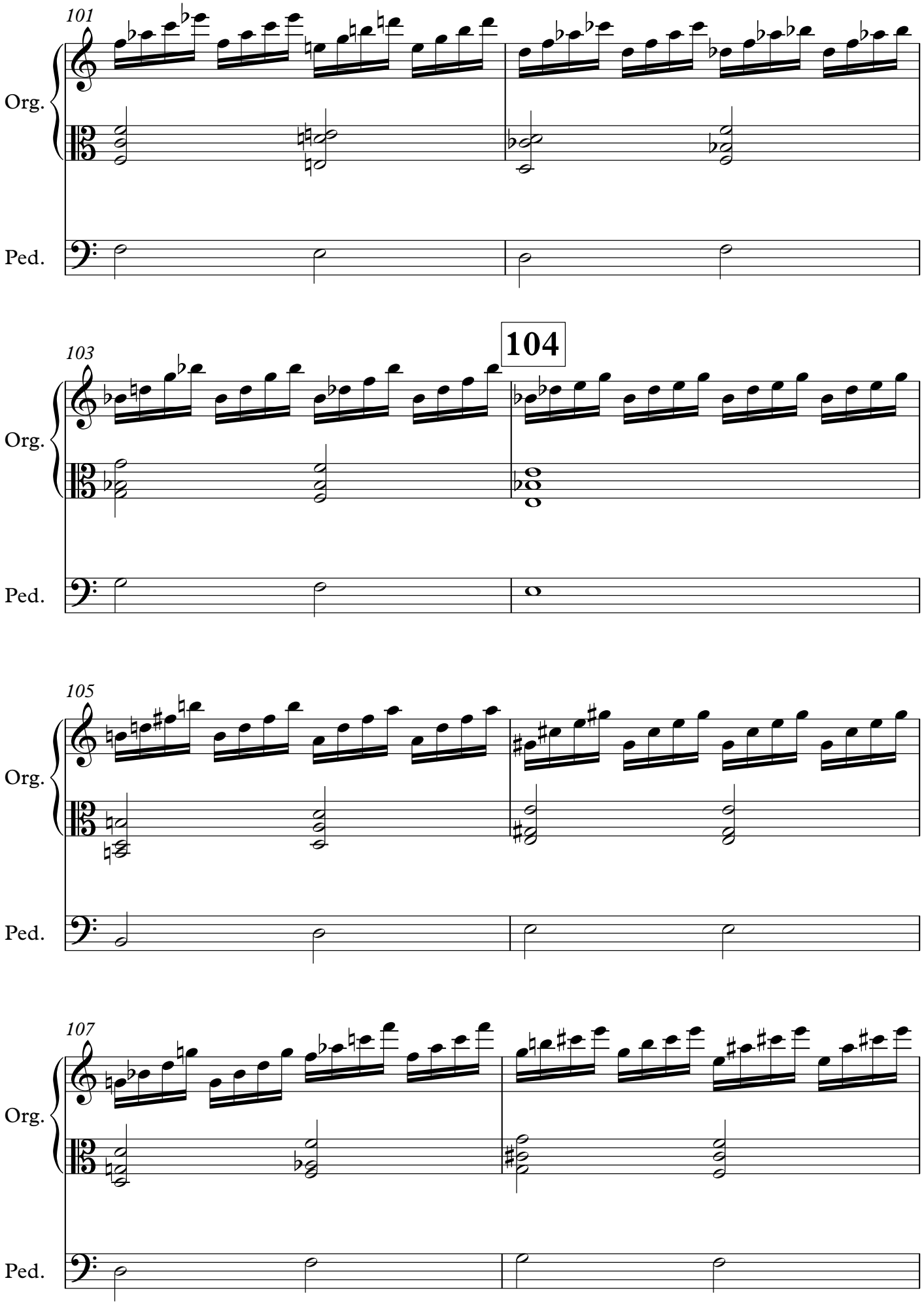

61
Org.
Ped.
63
63
Org.
Ped.
65
Org.
Ped.
67
67
Org.
Ped.


69
Org.
Ped.
71
71
Org.
Ped.
73
Org.
Ped.
75
75
Org.
Ped.


77
Org.
Ped.
79
79
Org.
Ped.
81
Org.
Ped.
83
83
Org.
Ped.


85
Org.
Ped.
accel.
87
87
Org.
Ped.
89
Org.
Ped.
91
91
Org.
Ped.


93
Org.
Ped.
95
Panicked and intense ♩ = 112
95
Org.
Ped.
97
Org.
Ped.
99
Org.
Ped.


101
Org.
Ped.
103
104
Org.
Ped.
105
Org.
Ped.
107
Org.
Ped.

110

109

Org.

Ped.

111

Org.

Ped.

113

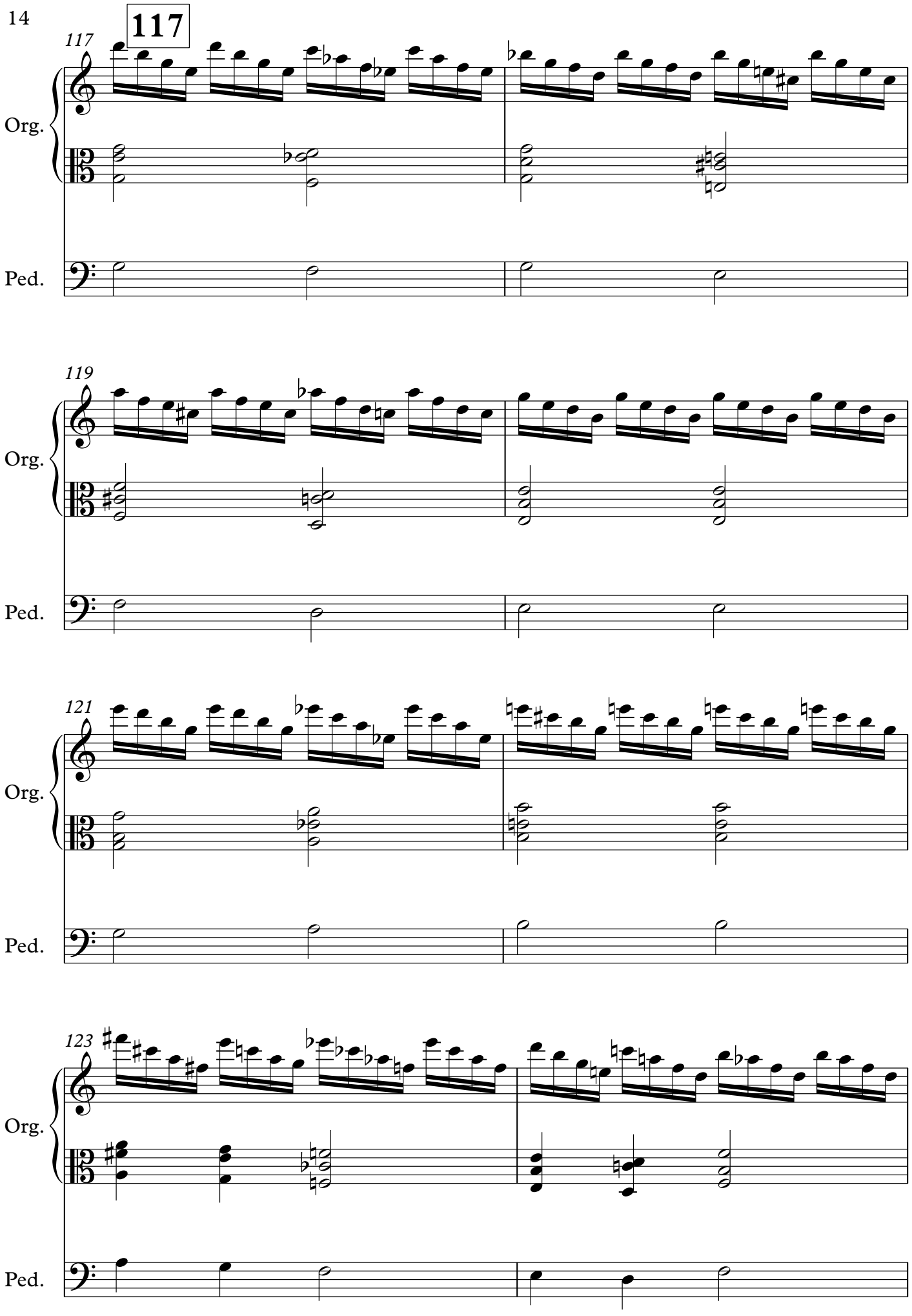
Org.

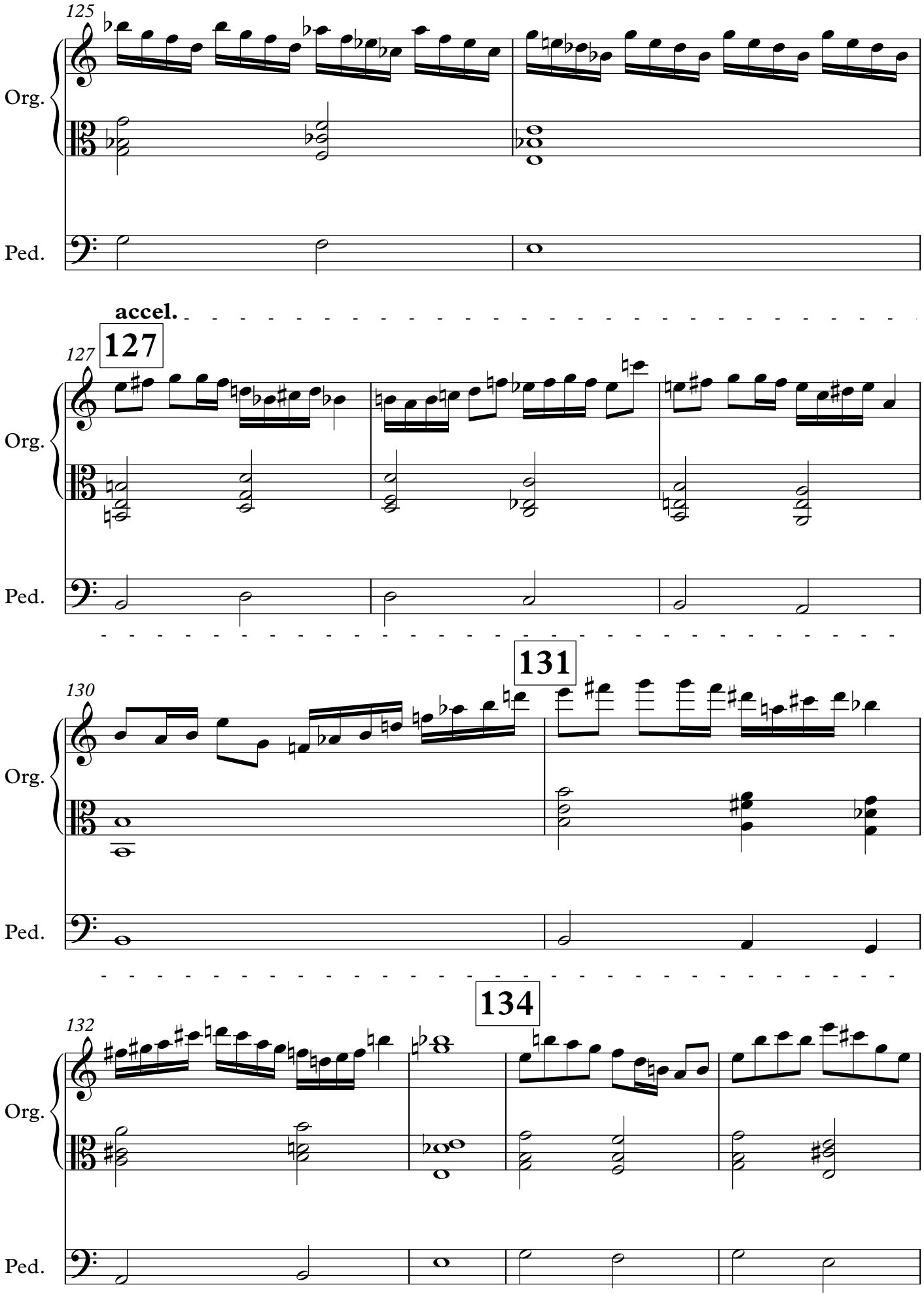
Ped.

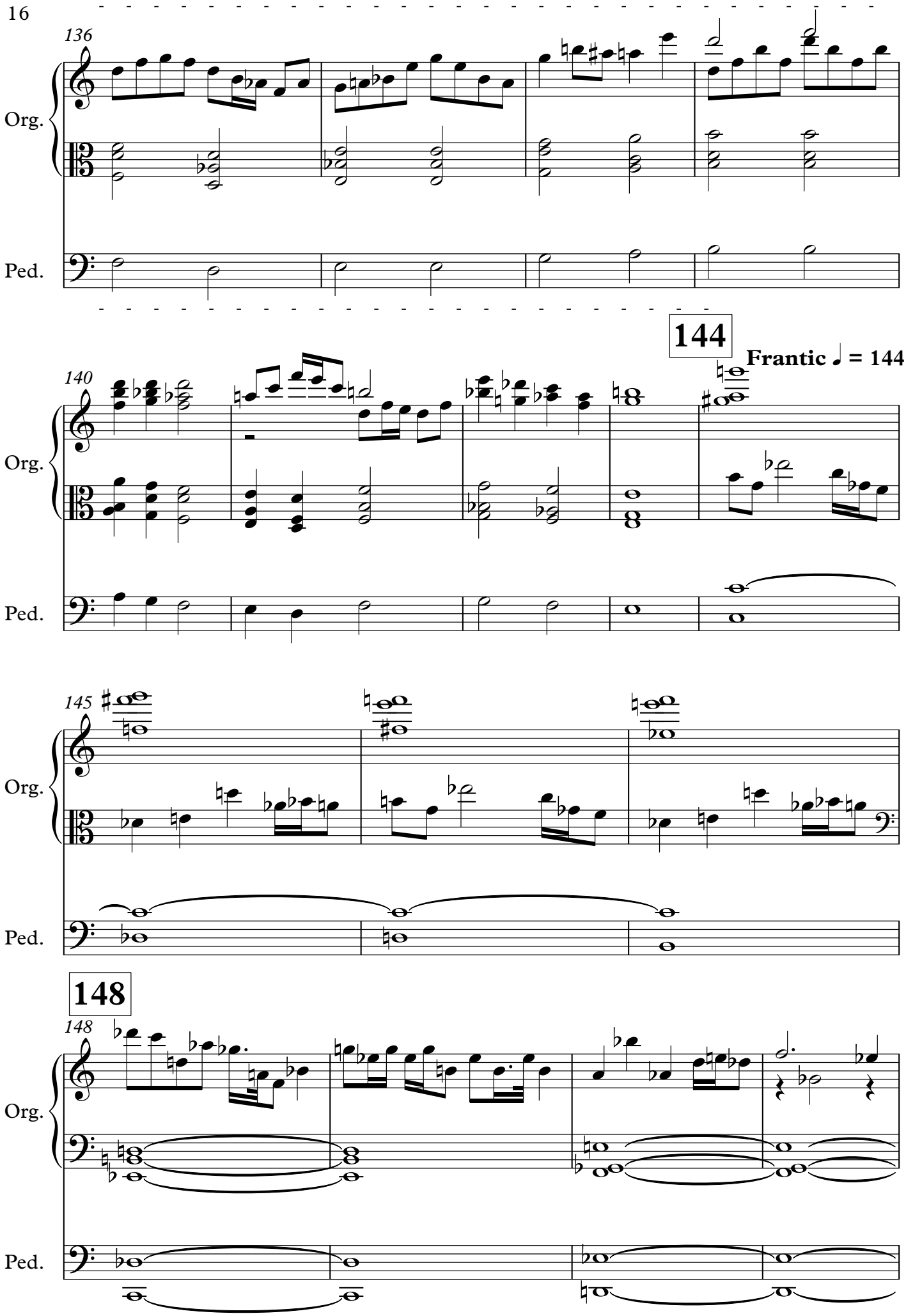
115

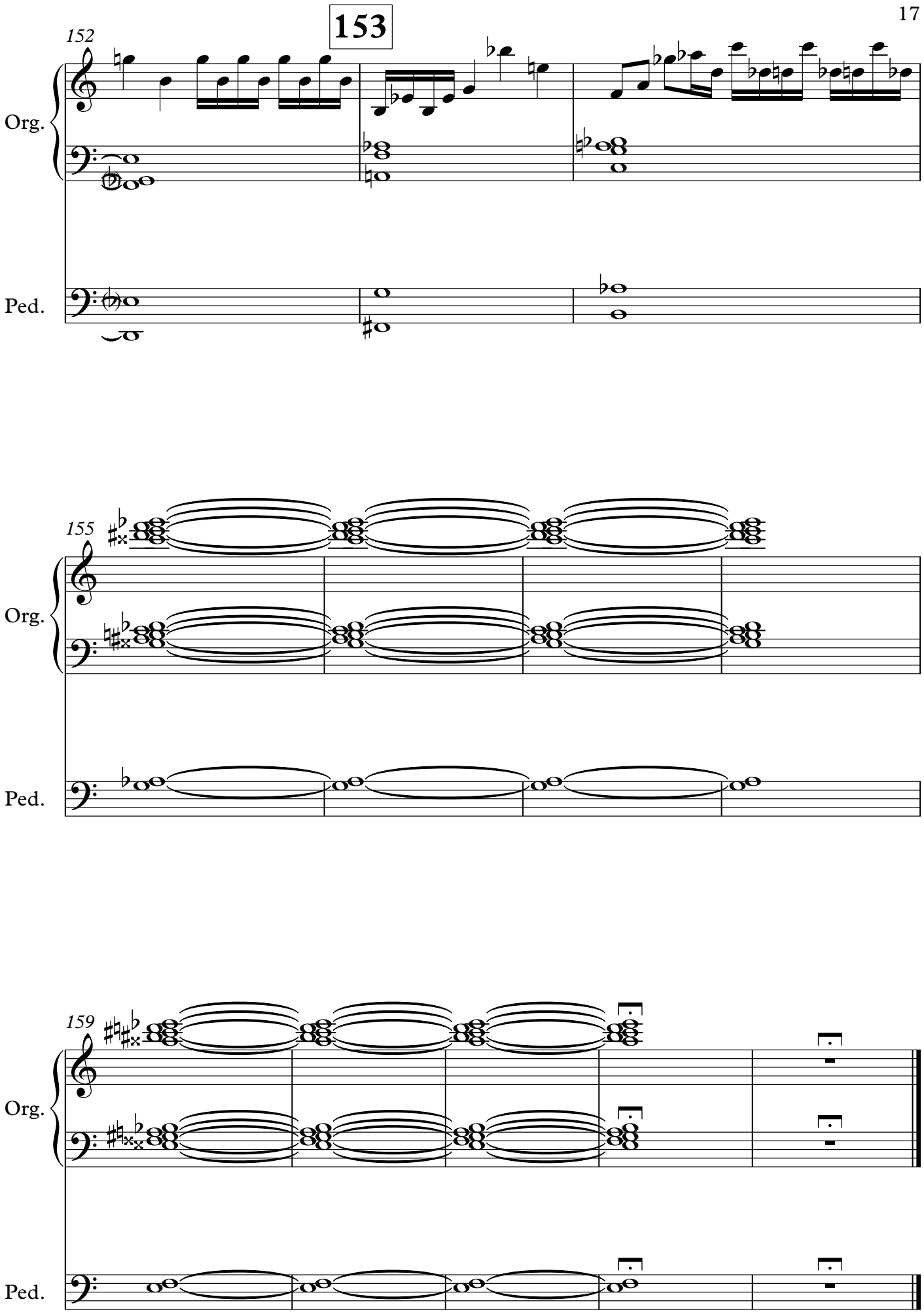
Org.

Ped.


117
117
Org.
Ped.
119
Org.
Ped.
121
Org.
Ped.
123
Org.
Ped.


125
Org.
Ped.
accel.
127
127
Org.
Ped.
131
130
Org.
Ped.
134
132
Org.
Ped.


136
Org.
Ped.
144
Frantic ♩ = 144
140
Org.
Ped.
145
Org.
Ped.
148
148
Org.
Ped.


153
152
Org.
Ped.
155
Org.
Ped.
159
Org.
Ped.